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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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Miller: “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back”

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, Rep. Jeff Miller, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, issued the following statement regarding the President’s 2013 Budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs:

“Upon first glance, VA’s 2013 budget appears positive given today’s constrained fiscal environment, which is a good step forward. The focus, however, should be on outcomes over budget increases: Are veterans getting better? Will the backlog of claims finally start coming down after a 100% spike in the past three years? We need to remember when dealing with VA’s budget that we are talking about real people, not just numbers.

“There are also obvious elephants in the VA budget, however. VA’s goal to eliminate veteran homelessness by 2015, while laudable, is now squarely in the sights of the administration’s new contraceptive policy, pitting numerous faith-based institutions that provide shelter for our nation’s veterans against their own moral beliefs. Without these institutions, our veterans will suffer the consequences of bad policy.

“Just as disconcerting though, is that nowhere in the VA budget is the possible sequester of VA healthcare in 2013 addressed. VA must begin to take sequestration seriously as any increase in discretionary spending next year may be cut if sequestration goes into effect. This is a poor strategy – one which I have warned VA for nearly eight months. This should have been one of the first priorities in the budget process, but the administration appears content to take the risk.

“These two steps back will greatly impact our veterans and need to be avoided at all costs.”

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